

January 28, 2007

Dear Friend:

Last Tuesday, President Bush delivered his seventh State of the Union Address to Congress and the nation. I am pleased the President has expressed a desire to find common ground with the new Majority in Congress, but only time will tell how willing he is to compromise on the issues Americans care about most.

The new Congress already has taken several bipartisan steps to move our nation in a new direction. I hope the President will work with us to continue our efforts to increase the minimum wage, to make our country safer from terrorism, and to make health care and education more affordable and accessible for more Americans.

In each of his previous State of the Union speeches, President Bush has promised to solve the energy needs of our nation, last year going so far as to refer to our "addiction to oil." Unfortunately, he and the previous Congress did little to mitigate the looming energy crisis. Americans need more than lip service; we need a new direction in our approach to energy.

Our nation needs bold, forward-thinking ideas and advanced initiatives that will help our nation achieve greater stability and energy independence. We need a comprehensive approach that balances traditional energy sources with measures to encourage energy efficiency, increase renewable energy production, and expand research for alternative energy programs. I also commend the President for acknowledging the seriousness of global warming, but I will continue to urge both him and my colleagues in Congress to acknowledge that this is one of the most pressing issues facing our nation, and it demands immediate action. We cannot wait.

On the issue of health care, I agree with the President on the need for action, but we differ on the best steps to solve the problem. Over the last 6 years, 6.8 million more Americans have lost health insurance, and premiums for family health insurance have risen 81 percent. While it sounds good, the health plan the President outlined would do nothing to help the vast majority of the 47 million uninsured. Unfortunately, his plan will raise taxes on many middle-class families and undermines the employer-provided health insurance system.

Ultimately, I am working for the implementation of universal health care for all Americans. But we need to take some incremental steps to get moving in the right direction. I believe a comprehensive plan should provide a tax credit for health insurance for small business, allow parents to buy into the S-CHIP program, and allow Americans age 55-64 to buy into Medicare. I believe that it is vital that we begin to provide all Americans with an opportunity for complete and full health insurance, and these are sound first steps.

However, the issue weighing most heavily on the hearts and minds of the American people is where we can least afford to stay the course: the war in Iraq. In last year's State of the Union Address, President Bush promised troop reductions and progress in Iraq. This year, the President instead has called for an escalation of the war effort. I do not support this approach, and renew my call for an immediate redeployment of our troops from Iraq. The American people -- and our troops -- demand a new direction in Iraq, not new rhetoric.

For more information on this or any federal issue, please visit my website at www.tomudall.house.gov.

Very Truly Yours,

Tom Udall
Member of Congress